

I. & S Wormser Building
128 J Street
Sacramento
Sacramento County
California

HABS No. CAL-196

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PHOTOGRAPHS

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
Historic American Buildings Survey

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THE I. & S. WORMSER BUILDING
Sacramento, Sacramento County, California

Address: 128 "J" Street (No. 28 old numbering system)
Occupant: Vacant
Use: Originally a clothing merchant store on ground floor; living quarters on second floor

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Wormser Building is of interest as it is one of the 1853 buildings, built immediately after the fire of November 2, 1852, and still existing. The cast-iron architectural details are typical of several similar buildings of the period.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Wormser Building was owned and built by B.F. Hastings in 1853 and rented to I. & S. Wormser, Clothing Merchants. The building was two stories, of brick masonry, measuring 20' x 85'. Isador and his brother, Wormser, are listed in the Sacramento Directory for 1856 as being from Louisiana and are first listed in the 1853-54 directory at 28 "J" Street. Subsequent directories give Germany as their place of origin.

The Wormser Brothers remained at 28 "J" Street until 1858 when they moved to Heywood's Building on the southeast corner of Second and "J" Streets, where they remained until 1864.

In 1850 Julius Gregory, from France, had operated a wagon express service from 1 "J" Street to the mining towns. In 1855 he established a wholesale produce market in the Pioneer Building, 120-124 "J" Street, moving next door to 126 "J" Street in 1860.

In 1870 the produce market of Julius Gregory at 126 "J" Street expanded to take in the old Wormser Store at 128 "J" Street. In 1880 Charles Barnes was taken into the firm under the name of Gregory, Barnes & Co., becoming Gregory Brothers Co. in 1883, and continuing under that name until 1900.

The Gregory brothers were Eugene and Frank. Eugene Gregory became Mayor of Sacramento in 1888.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The typical lot, as laid out in the 1854 Official Map of Sacramento, based on the Captain Warner survey of 1848, was 80' wide on the street frontage. In turn the average 80' lot was divided into parcels of 20' width and the majority of the original, small commercial buildings were consequently but 20' wide. This circumstance accounts for so many of them being similar, almost identical, in architectural treatment---fenestration on the ground floor consisting of three arched or flat-lintel openings and, on the second floor, three windows.

The building was raised to the new street level when "J" Street was raised approximately a story height in 1865 as a result of the 1861-62 flood.

The fluted, half-round, engaged cast-iron columns with bell-shaped capitals and flattened, oval arches are typical of the same details employed in the facade of the Pioneer Hall and Bakery, 120-124 "J" Street; the H.W. Stein Store, 218 "J" Street; and the James Bithell Bookstore, originally on "J" Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets. All three of the latter were built in 1853 and raised to the new street grade in 1865.

The paneled double doors are typical of the 1865 period and probably date from the raising of the building in that year.

The original second floor window frames and sash (which were probably casement type with transoms) have been replaced with modern double-hung windows.

The interior plan arrangement has been altered by so many changes over the years as to make it impossible to determine the original layout.

REFERENCES:

1. Sacramento Directories 1850-1870
2. Old Sacramento, Part II, (State of California, 1958)
3. Sacramento Guide Book, (Bee, 1939)

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